

State Senator

District 16

# Sarah Steelman

## Legislative Report

Dear Constituents:

As we draw closer to the beginning of the next legislative session, it is important to reflect on the successes and failures of the past session. In this newsletter, I have highlighted a few of the laws that were passed which I believe are good for Missourians. These past few years have been lean years for Missouri citizens. Costs keep increasing whether it is healthcare, prescription drugs, insurance premiums or tuition. It is not the time to raise taxes. On the contrary, we need to stimulate growth in Missouri – not take more hard-earned dollars from the taxpaying public. However, many special interest groups are lobbying for tax increases. If we don't have the revenue, then we must evaluate our priorities and fund what is more important. Instead of pointing partisan fingers we must act like statesmen and find solutions to these problems.

Missourians have always been able to overcome adversity. In fact, in overcoming adversity we become stronger. Missouri is the Show-Me State by reputation. We are not afraid to face our problems. We are not afraid to persevere for the future of this state and country. Politicians these days like to talk about family values but when it comes to solving problems, sometimes those values go out the window. My husband, David, and I have three sons. We know that a family that works together is built on solving problems not running from them or pointing fingers at each other. It is built on looking adversity in the eye and saying – you are not getting the best of me or my family. It is about persevering after goals that make your family better off spiritually, physically, intellectually and financially. It is about yielding to each other and putting others first. This is how we cultivate strong family values and this is how we, as legislators, should be cultivating our state's political culture.

Thank you for the privilege of serving as the Senator from the 16<sup>th</sup> Senatorial District and enjoy the newsletter!

*Sarah H. Steelman*

# Preserving Our Constitutional Rights

## Laws Passed to Protect and Expand Fundamental Freedoms

### The Right to Keep and Bear Arms

Missouri is one of only three states having absolutely no system by which law-abiding citizens can legally carry protective firearms in a purse or beneath a jacket. For more than 12 years, I have worked to help secure this important right for Missouri citizens.

This year, I continued my support of gun rights by voting for HB 349, which established a permit system to allow qualified individuals 22 and older to obtain legal-carry permits after passing a training course and an extensive background check.

This legislation was carefully drafted to address all issues raised in previous right-to-carry debates in both the House and Senate.

Sadly, Gov. Holden, chose to veto this bill during a big ceremony in St. Louis just as our nation kicked off the Independence Day celebration. Lawmakers voted to override the governor's veto. Opponents now are challenging the law in court.

The ability to protect one's self is important, especially for older and more vulnerable citizens. Rest assured our efforts will continue to win the freedoms in Missouri to which citizens are now privileged in almost every other state.

### Restoring Religious Freedom

The freedom of religion is one of the most basic in our nation and our constitution. For decades, courts have applied the highest possible test — the compelling state interest test — before religious aspects could be infringed. This required a compelling interest on the part of the state before a religious practice or property was infringed. In 1990, however, the standard was reduced to the rational basis test. This means it is only rational for the state to infringe the religion-based issue — a compelling public need does not have to be proved.

To correct this, the General Assembly this year passed SB 12 — the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. This act requires the compelling state interest test to be imposed on all government laws and ordinances that might infringe upon one's exercise of religion. This places religious rights under the strongest possible protection. The new law took effect in our state on Aug. 28.

### Helping America Vote

In a government of the people, voting is an essential right for citizens. This year, I supported and the Legislature passed HB 511, which changes state law to comply with the federal Help America Vote Act of 2002.

This law makes a number of changes to help ensure fair and efficient election processes in our state. It makes

the training of election judges mandatory, sets up a statewide pool of election judges, clarifies the role of election watchers and provides for extra polling places to ensure elderly citizens or citizens with handicaps are able to cast ballots.

These and other provisions will help ensure that our state's elections are

free, fair and in compliance with federal guidelines to protect the electoral process in our state and nation.

*The framers of our Constitution believed that every person was born with fundamental, unalienable rights. As such, these rights were recognized, rather than granted, by our Constitution.*

*Countless Americans have fought and have died to sustain these rights. This year, in our own General Assembly, legislation was passed to help protect and expand the exercise of the freedoms enumerated by our Constitution.*



**Senator Steelman holds an amendment while debating a proposal on the floor of the Missouri Senate during the regular legislative session.**

## Honoring Our Veterans

This is the 50th anniversary of the Korean war and to honor those veterans I sponsored and won approval for legislation that awards Korean War veterans a special medal and certificate of appreciation from the state of Missouri.

The Korean conflict has been labeled 'The Forgotten War,' but the veterans who served in that conflict must never be forgotten. This medal recognizes the heroic contributions these veterans made in service to our nation — and to other nations — in first stopping the Communist advance in Asia.

SB 219 entitles any Korean Conflict veteran (military service beginning June 27, 1950, and ending January 31, 1955) who was honorably discharged and resides in Missouri to receive a medallion, medal and a certificate of appreciation.



Veterans — or their surviving spouse or child, may apply for the medal beginning in 2004. The medal program is similar to that established for veterans of World War II several years ago. This bill also expands the World War II medal program and allows surviving children or spouses to apply for medals.

The contribution of our veterans is something we must honor and cherish. This medal program helps accomplish that for veterans — and for the generations who must learn of the tremendous accomplishments our veterans made for all of us.

### Schools to Observe Veterans Day Under Bill Passed By Steelman

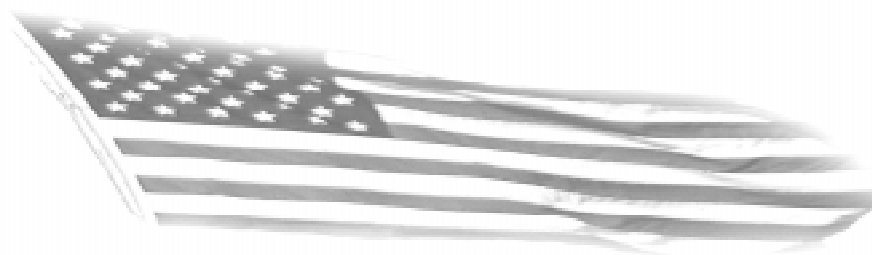
I also filed and won approval for a measure that establishes a special observance of Veterans Day in all of Missouri's public schools. The measure, SB 325, directs the board of each school district to require schools to devote one class period to an observance of the significance of Veterans Day.

America's veterans have won for us a level of freedom unlike that enjoyed by any other nation. It is absolutely essential that young people understand the heroic sacrifices our veterans have made on our behalf and that of other nations, as well.

We expect the change to be well-received by both schools and students participating in the observances.

I think schools will welcome the chance to discuss the role of veterans in securing our independence and freedom. And, with the faces of young soldiers on almost every newscast, I think our students are appreciating a new generation of heroes as positive role models.

The law took effect on Aug. 28 to allow observances to begin during the current school year.





## Budget Battles Dominate 2003 Session

The biggest job facing state lawmakers each year is formulating the state budget that funds virtually all programs and services Missouri provides for citizens. This year, declining revenues resulting from a recession-bound state economy and over-spending over the past 10 years made that job more difficult.

Under our state's budgeting system, no tax dollars can be spent without legislative authorization. The budget is based on revenue projections made up to 18 months before the expenditure. If revenues fall below projections on which the budget is based, state law requires the governor to withhold expenditures to balance the budget.

This year, lawmakers faced two funding challenges: completing the fiscal year that ended June 30, and developing a budget for the new fiscal year that began July 1.

To complete FY 03, Gov. Holden deeply cut funding for mental health, senior services and higher education, and proposed selling off Missouri's future payments from the national tobacco settlement. The Senate developed a more cost-effective plan using less-costly revenue bonds.

In his budget request in January, Gov. Holden surprised citizens and lawmakers by requesting a tax increase on tobacco identical to one defeated by voters only two months earlier.

We were not going to advance yet another tax increase after voters defeated three statewide tax increase proposals last fall.

This year's budget debate also was complicated by a "lump sum" budget passed by the House. I did not agree with this method because it relinquished legislative control over expenditures by departments by giving un-elected department heads, rather than lawmakers, spending control.

The Senate changed this plan back to the conventional budget method, and balanced the budget on real revenue — not revenue the governor had hoped to collect from tax increases that had not yet been approved by voters.

The Senate plan best addressed our state's current budget reality. However, Gov. Holden vetoed four entire budget bills — another first for our state — because lawmakers had approved less than he had requested. The governor then called a special session of the Legislature to reconsider budget bills for public schools, colleges, health and social services.

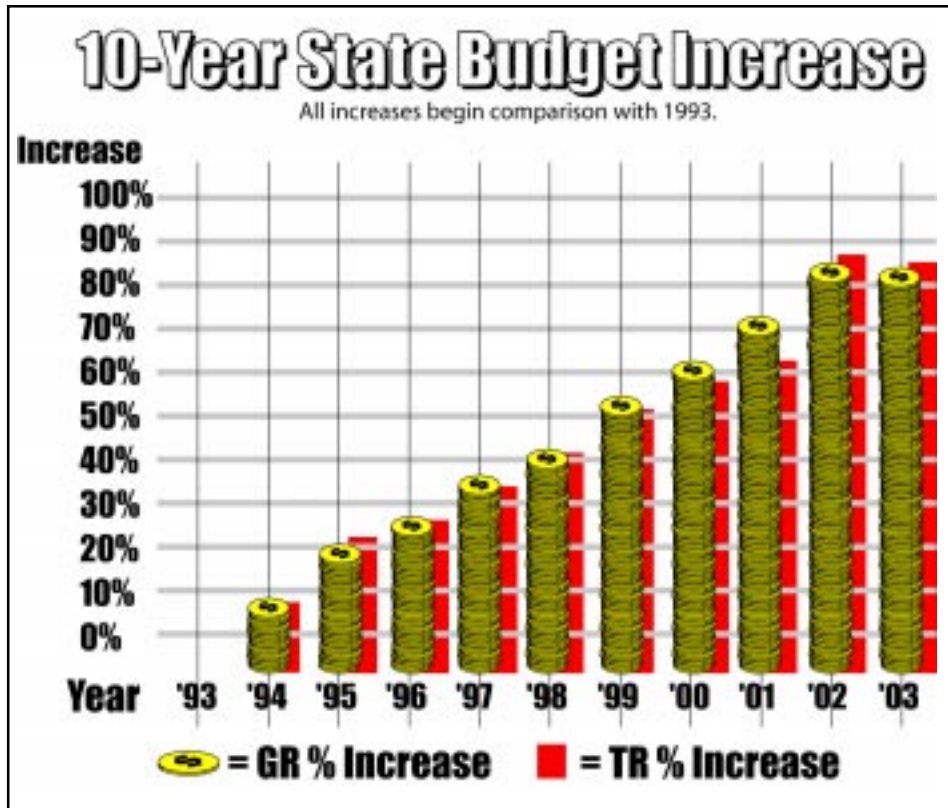
Using federal funds provided by President Bush's economic stimulus act, lawmakers were able to increase funding for Medicaid, school and college programs. However, Gov. Holden again vetoed funding for education and higher education. As the budget deadline approached,

lawmakers again passed identical budget bills and Gov. Holden finally signed the bills.

This was one of the most difficult budgets in our state's history. The final result? The total operating budget approved for last year (FY03) was \$18.993 billion. The operating budget approved for this year (FY04) is \$19.094 billion — an increase of \$91 million.

In January, Gov. Holden requested appropriations of \$19.291 billion. Lawmakers approved \$19.094 billion. After six months of tough budget fights, how far apart were lawmakers and the governor? A total of 1.02 percent.

This is a responsible, balanced budget without tax increases. Like the families of our state, this budget reflects real resources and is a funding plan that keeps spending within our means.



## Helping Protect Public Schools

Nothing is more important than assuring a good, public education for our school children. While everyone agrees on the importance of public education, reasonable people can disagree on the best way to provide the best education.

This year, much of the debate focused on funding for public schools. Lawmakers have taken every possible step to protect appropriations for public schools despite revenue shortfalls. While other departments have been subject to severe budget cuts, lawmakers have worked to spare funding for public schools. This year, through this effort, the Legislature was able to appropriate the same amount schools received last year after withholdings by the Governor.

The Governor's decision to withhold an additional \$200 million from schools is one that was not well taken by lawmakers. With state revenue growth on the upswing, some have asked the Governor to release the funds so schools can receive the full amount lawmakers approved for public schools. Lawmakers also are concerned by cuts that have been made in the budget for colleges and universities.

Public budget policy involves the hard choices of distributing limited revenues among unlimited demands. Our commitment to taxpayers is and always should be to ensure the most in services for every dime paid in taxes. This year, the Missouri General Assembly made tough choices to protect schools, create jobs and help stimulate our economic recovery.

---



## Walk Against ALS

State Sen. Sarah Steelman and her mother, shown left, took part in "Walk to Defeat ALS" in October in Jefferson City. The purpose of the walk is to raise money to speed the search for a cure for Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, more commonly known as ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease.

Sarah and her mother (who has been diagnosed with ALS) were among more than 50,000 people who took part in the Walk, which raised more than \$6 million to help fund research in the battle against the disease that currently does not have a cure.



# Protecting Missouri's Children

## *Legislature Adopts "Amber Alert" Bill*

Lawmakers this year gave approval to the "Alert Missouri" program, a rapid response plan to child abductions similar to "Amber Alerts" in other states.

The measure, SB 30, helps coordinate police and public efforts with local and statewide media to rapidly share information about child abductions. Careful guidelines are established to ensure the alert system is used only for legitimate abductions requiring statewide attention to help safely recover children.

### Minimum Age for Cabaret Dancers

In response to concerns raised by citizens in our district, we won approval for SB 298, a measure sets a minimum age of 19 for dancers in adult cabarets.

Prior to the Steelman legislation, no specific minimum age was set by law — creating a situation in which high school girls as young as 17 could legally perform in adult entertainment clubs.

The new minimum age of 19 would prevent high school girls from dancing in strip clubs — and help protect all young people against sexual exploitation in the adult entertainment industry.

This bill was passed by the General Assembly and signed into law by the governor. Implementation of the law, however, has been delayed by a lawsuit filed by businesses in the adult entertainment industry.



### Sen. Steelman Wins Approval for Safe At Home Act

*Legislation helps protect senior citizens*

A three-year effort by myself and others to increase protections for Missouri's older citizens paid off this year with approval of the Safe At Home Act.

I introduced this legislation in 2001 after learning of severe cases of abuse and neglect of older citizens receiving in-home care. The law, passed as an amendment to SB 556, requires the Department of Health and Senior Services to conduct a "Safe at Home" evaluation.

A nurse must authorize a service plan for each in-home care client. The Department is directed to work with other departments and to conduct visits of each home-care client at least twice each year to monitor the level and quality of treatment.

The bill is part of a comprehensive overhaul of state regulations that increases penalties for continued care facilities that fail to provide adequate care or that attempt to hide violations from inspectors.

### New State Symbol Helps Boost Tourism, Highlight Local Wine Industry

This session, we won approval for a measure to help increase tourism, the state's second-largest industry, by adopting a state symbol relating to Missouri's wine industry. This measure establishes the Norton/Cynthiana grape as the official state grape. This will help bring deserved recognition to this industry in our state. This hardy, blight-resistant grape, first tended in Gasconade County by German settlers as early as 1850, provided cuttings that saved the California and French vineyards from a terrible blight in the late 19th century. Since then it has become the basis for Missouri's increasingly well-regarded lines of wines produced largely in our area of the state.



# Building a Stronger Missouri Economy

## *Missouri Downtown Stimulus Act (MODESA) Helps Preserve Our Rural Way of Life*

This year I succeeded in a two year effort to win approval for a comprehensive package to help stimulate economic activity in downtown business districts and create jobs in rural areas. For many years, tax incentives to help preserve downtowns were only available to urban areas, and rural areas could not compete for state dollars. The Missouri Downtown Economic Stimulus Act levels the playing field for rural areas wishing to offer incentives to businesses to stay in the downtown.

Our rural way of life is important and we need to make an effort to preserve these local businesses that choose to locate in what is commonly referred to as “the downtown.” The legislation allows for local developers to apply for a reimbursement of state tax dollars that are generated by that business to be used solely for the purpose of developing the public infrastructure. For example, if a downtown area wanted to add a parking lot, the state tax dollars generated from the business having located there would be returned to the city to build a parking lot. MODESA is designed to encourage the preservation of the downtown area by using tax dollars to build infrastructure that could help a small business stay in the downtown area.

It is a tool that is not only targeted for rural Missouri towns but it will also help urban areas that have declining populations and industry in their downtowns.

---

## Stelman Works To Reign-In Bureaucratic Over-Regulation

Farmers and small businesses provide the foundation for our state’s economy. Despite their importance, they also seem to be the most abused by bureaucratic over-regulation and the most threatened by arbitrary rules that are needless and difficult to follow.

This session, other lawmakers and I advanced legislation to require the Department of Natural Resources to use sound scientific methods for developing environmental regulations. This bill, SB 36, also required cost-benefit analyses and risk assessments to be completed before new environmental regulations are imposed.

To help farmers and ranchers in our district, Sen. Steelman amended to this bill a measure she has introduced allowing land owners working on their own property to be exempt from obtaining from DNR a permit for the removal of sand and gravel if it is under 2500 tons a year. This proposal would have eliminated some of the paperwork required of land owners.

This measure passed both the Senate and the House, but died on the last day of session because of a filibuster in the Senate.

Responsible, needed regulations to protect the environment are important. But unresponsive bureaucracies that make it difficult or impossible to promulgate

rules that can be followed by businesses and individuals serve the interests of none.

I will continue the effort in the General Assembly to protect businesses and farmers from needless over-regulation .

---

## Helping With Health-Care Costs

This session I introduced legislation that would help small businesses and self-insured individuals offset the costs of health care coverage. This legislation, SB 26, would establish a tax credit for up to 10 percent of the unreimbursed cost of health insurance. As a tax credit, this would not be a deduction, but would be applied against a person’s tax liability.

Now, large companies enjoy tax breaks and a cost advantage resulting from the size of their coverage pool. This legislation would help individuals, the self-employed and smaller companies enjoy a similar advantage under Missouri’s tax law. The bill would help stimulate the economy and provide a needed break for individuals and small businesses purchasing health coverage in our state.

## Lawmakers Override Vetoes During Historic Session

*Carry permits and abortion waiting period enacted over Governor's objections*

In this year's September veto session, lawmakers voted to place three measures into effect over the vetoes of Gov. Bob Holden. This is the largest number of overrides of any governor since 1855.

The override of a veto requires a two-thirds majority approval in both the Senate and the House of Representatives.

One measure, HB 349, establishes a system that allows law-abiding citizens to obtain permits to carry concealed firearms after passing a training course and a background check. Prior to this override, Missouri was one of only six states with no system by which citizens could legally carry firearms for personal protection. The new law takes effect on Oct. 11.

Lawmakers also overrode the veto of HB 156. This measure requires a waiting period of at least 24 hours following a consultation with a physician before an abortion can be performed. The measure requires both the physician and the patient to sign a consent form

indicating that physical and psychological risk factors had been discussed.

Also overridden was SB 13, which prohibits cities

and counties from filing frivolous lawsuits against gun makers, distributors or dealers engaged in legal businesses activities. This law is intended to address lawsuits cities file against gun makers in an attempt to get settlements over the social cost of crimes involving firearms.

None of these suits have succeeded nationally, and most have been dismissed. Legal manufacturers and distributors, however, have been forced out of business — or have been forced to pay large amounts in legal fees — to defend against these baseless lawsuits.



***During this year's veto session, Sen. Steelman joined a bipartisan majority of lawmakers voting to override vetos on personal protection, abortion waiting period bills and gun lawsuits.***

The override by lawmakers places the laws into effect after 30 days. The last time the Legislature overrode a veto by the Governor was in 1999 to implement a ban on partial birth abortions that had been vetoed by then-Gov. Carnahan.

## When You Need Help or to contact Senator Steelman



Jane Rydlund  
Capitol Office



Jim Dunn  
District Office

### CAPITOL OFFICE:

State Capitol  
Room 422  
Jefferson City, Missouri 65102  
PHONE: 573-751-4068

### DISTRICT OFFICE:

P. O. Box 1459  
Rolla, Missouri, 65402  
PHONE: 573-308-1870  
Email: dist16@fidnet.com